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Friday, December 17, 2010

Morning Psalms 102; 148

First Reading Isaiah 10:5-19

Second Reading 2 Peter 2:17-22

Gospel Matthew 11:2-15

Evening Psalms 130; 16

5 Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger—the club in their hands is my fury! 6 Against a godless nation I send him, and against the people of my wrath I command him, to take spoil and seize plunder, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. But this is not what he intends, nor does he have this in mind; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few. 8 For he says: ‘Are not my commanders all kings? 9 Is not Calno like Carchemish? Is not Hamath like Arpad? Is not Samaria like Damascus? 10 As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols whose images were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria, 11 shall I not do to Jerusalem and her idols what I have done to Samaria and her images?’ 12 When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he will punish the arrogant boasting of the king of Assyria and his haughty pride. 13 For he says: ‘By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I have understanding; I have removed the boundaries of peoples, and have plundered their treasures; like a bull I have brought down those who sat on thrones. 14 My hand has found, like a nest, the wealth of the peoples; and as one gathers eggs that have been forsaken, so I have gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved a wing, or opened its mouth, or chirped.’ 15 Shall the axe vaunt itself over the one who wields it, or the saw magnify itself against the one who handles it? As if a rod should raise the one who lifts it up, or as if a staff should lift the one who is not wood! 16 Therefore the Sovereign, the Lord of hosts, will send wasting sickness among his stout warriors, and under his glory a burning will be kindled, like the burning of fire. 17 The light of Israel will become a fire, and his Holy One a flame; and it will burn and devour his thorns and briers in one day. 18 The glory of his forest and his fruitful land the Lord will destroy, both soul and body, and it will be as when an invalid wastes away. 19 The remnant of the trees of his forest will be so few that a child can write them down.

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“It’s not all about you,” Rick Warren famously wrote. It’s notoriously difficult to get it that everything is not all about me—or even my favorite version of “us.”

Israel didn’t get that: they were sure everything, including God, was all about them. The Assyrian king didn’t get it that conquering Israel wasn’t all about him but about God’s judgment on his people. So Isaiah said the Lord would punish that king’s arrogant boasting and the haughty look in his eyes.

It's not good to mess with God about ultimate things. God's work in Christ is not all about you and your salvation, and it isn't all about you and your congregation, or even about us and our favorite seminary. It's about God's purpose to unite everything under the Lordship of Christ.

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Prayer: Father, send your Spirit, please: help us examine our lives, our families, our congregations, our vocations, so that we are about you and your work to rescue the world in Jesus.